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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000693

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NSC FOR MGAVIN
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
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SUBJECT: DARFUR SECURITY UPDATE MAY 27

REF: A) KHARTOUM 687
B) KHARTOUM 678
C) 08 KHARTOUM 1302

11. (SBU) Summary: Backed by the forces of SLA/Minnawi, the SAF remains in firm control of Um Barro following its May 24 battle with JEM, according to UNAMID sources. Though both sides suffered casualties in the fighting, several JEM commanders are rumored to have been killed, and the rebel force also lost a number of vehicles captured or destroyed by the GOS. In West Darfur meanwhile, the sheikh of Hujaj IDP camp outside of Geneina town told a UNAMID confidence building patrol that that Goka village (25km south Geneina) had been taken over by Chadian rebel elements who set up a checkpoint there and were subjecting villagers to harassment, as well as incidents of shootings and rape. In South Darfur, intense tribal violence broke out on the border with neighboring South Kordofan between armed elements of the Misseriya and Rizeigat on May 22-26, according to UNMIS. Scores of Misseriya, Rizeigat, and Central Reserve Police attempting to quell the fighting have reportedly been killed. Finally, SLA/Abdul Wahid commanders who traveled to Switzerland last month for a capacity building workshop with their leader remain stranded in N'Djamena and Nairobi, apparently unable to obtain travel assistance necessary to get back to the field. End Summary.

SAF MAINTAINS CONTROL IN UM BARRO

12. (SBU) In a UNAMID briefing on May 26, UNAMID Chief of Plans Col. Noddy Stafford told a visiting U.S. Congressional delegation that Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) are firmly in control of Um Barro, North Darfur, in conjunction with Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/ Minnawi fighters. The site of fierce clashes on May 24 (Ref A), Um Barro has remained within the control of the GOS despite numerous unarmed SAF soldiers who sought protection at the UNAMID team site there, home to 900 Senegalese peacekeepers. UNAMID sees the recent unofficial SAF military alliance with Minnawi as key to their retention of the area, as the SAF additionally assisted Minnawi on May 9 with significant artillery fire to ward off a JEM attack of Minnawi positions in the same area. UNAMID peacekeepers reported on May 26 that two SAF Mi-24 "Hind" helicopters hovered over Um Barro in a defensive posture beginning in the morning. UNAMID did not have firm numbers related to the capture of SAF prisoners by JEM during the fighting, but affirmed that SAF authorities handed over two captured JEM fighters to UNAMID at the Umm Barro team site on May 25, and UNAMID is currently facilitating their medical care.

13. (SBU) UNAMID sources also told poloff on May 26 that there are approximately 51 casualties from the May 24 fighting in Um Barro requiring medevacs, including GOS, JEM, SLA/Minnawi soldiers and civilians. About half of these were successfully transported to El Fasher for medical treatment, though two of the casualties, one GOS soldier and one SLA/Minnawi soldier, died on May 26. Urgent supply

of medicine has been requested by the Senegalese battalion at Um Barro, and two of the Senegalese soldiers suffered minor injuries from shrapnel as a result of the May 24 fighting. Some UNAMID vehicles and a generator were also hit by stray bullets. About 350 displaced civilians had taken refuge outside the UNAMID Camp and remain in need of humanitarian assistance.

UM BARRO ATTACKS PROVE COSTLY TO JEM

14. (SBU) JEM appears to have suffered significant losses in its attack on Um Barro. Several sources told UNAMID that JEM lost 48 vehicles (22 captured by GOS, 24 destroyed in action, and 2 abandoned in the course of retreat). Between the fighting in Kornoi and Um Barro, JEM has also apparently lost a number of commanders, including Hamma Shatta (former SLA/Unity commander loyal to Sharif Harir), and Mohamed Hassan and Kebur (original JEM commanders). Bakhit Karima, JEM commander who defected from SLA/Minnawi in December and was rumored to be among those responsible for JEM's January-February foray into Muhajeriya, is said to have broken his leg in the fighting in Um Barro. It is believed that with these heavy losses, it is unlikely JEM will launch another attack on the GOS in North Darfur in the immediate future.

REPORTS OF CHADIAN REBELS SOUTH OF GENEINA

15. (SBU) In West Darfur meanwhile, reliable information on the whereabouts of Chadian rebel groups remains elusive. The National Security and Intelligence Service (NISS) has taken over a number of checkpoints there from GOS police and military, ensuring that access remains highly restricted. During a recent UNAMID confidence

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building patrol to Hujaj IDP camp outside of Geneina town, however, the local camp sheikh reported that Goka village (25km south Geneina) had been taken over by Chadian rebel elements and that villagers there were increasingly subjected to rape, shooting and harassment. The camp sheik claimed to have personally spoken with the lead Chadian rebel commander there, who has mounted his own check point near that of the GOS. The commander said that he and his men were Chadians and were waiting for logistical support to return to Chad. While unable to confirm this information, UNAMID sources believe it is probable that Chadian rebels have returned to encampments south of Geneina (in the area encompassing Goka), and possibly encampments near Habila and Forobaranga (south of Geneina) and near Hamroh (north of Geinena).

SLA/ABDUL WAHID COMMANDERS STILL STUCK OUTSIDE DARFUR

16. (SBU) Speaking by phone from N'Djamena, SLA/Abdul Wahid commander Abdalla Khalil told poloff on May 27 that the 30 SLA/AW commanders still in the Chadian capital have been stymied in the efforts to return to Jebel Marra. After traveling to Switzerland to attend a conference with Abdul Wahid in early May, the SLA/AW commanders arrived in N'Djamena intending to travel back to Darfur, but no international partners or the Chadian government have worked to facilitate their return. Told that SE Gration would travel to Paris to meet with Abdul Wahid to discuss issues including a ceasefire and the Doha negotiations, Khalil insisted that the movement intends to engage further with the international community. "Even if Abdul Wahid refuses a ceasefire, you can come back and speak to us and Gadura in Jebel Marra," he said. "We have to change our strategy in the coming days and deal more with the international community. We have a different vision." Not enjoying the leisurely lifestyle away from the field, Abdalla Khalil appealed to the U.S. and the UN to assist the SLA/AW commanders in returning to Jebel Marra. Another contingent of SLA/AW remains in Nairobi, SLA/AW Ibrahim Al Helou told poloff on May 23, while SLA/AW Commander Suleiman Marjan is still in Cairo.

TRIBAL CLASHES ON THE EDGE OF SOUTH DARFUR

17. (SBU) While South Darfur has been devoid of rebel activity in

recent months--outside of the Jebel Marra area, there is little meaningful rebel presence in South Darfur--inter-Arab tribal violence there has been heating up. According to UNMIS, clashes broke out on May 22-26 between the Misseriya of Southern Kordofan (Fayareen) and the Rezeigat (Awlad Umsalama) of Southern Darfur across the borders of the two states in areas of Shagadi and Mirayr (near Mayram). The hostilities allegedly claimed heavy loss of life among the two tribes, with 104 Misseriya and 67 Rezeigat reportedly killed, including 15 missing. The number of wounded is not known. During the fighting, a contingent from the Central Reserve Police (CRP) of 100 persons, sent earlier by South Kordofan Governor Ahmed Haroun to act as a buffer, was also attacked. More than 70 police have reportedly been killed, as well as 11 SAF soldiers. Both tribes retain huge numbers of former PDF elements believed to be over 30,000, according to UNMIS. A visit to the flash areas by the Minister of Defense and the Governors of South Darfur and South Kordofan was planned for May 27.

18. (SBU) Comment: Whatever their aims, JEM's attacks on Karnoi and Umm Barro appear to have backfired. Not only have they brought SLA/Minnawi and the GOS closer together, but the resulting displacement of civilians has done little to win the Chad-based movement any popular support or endear them to the local population. In turn, the GOS has shown rather remarkable restraint in the face of the wave of JEM attacks; unlike the events of Muhajeriya in early 2009, they appear to have refrained from any indiscriminant bombing of civilian areas in pursuit of JEM. One can only hope that such restraint will extend to GOS support for Chadian rebels, whose window to regroup and mobilize additional attacks is diminished as the rainy season approaches. With regard to SLA/AW, meanwhile, the presence of so many of his commanders in the JEM-friendly territory of N'Djamena is likely making Abdul Wahid extremely nervous; this could perhaps serve as a point of leverage when SE Gration meets the intransigent leader in Paris. End comment.

ASQUINO